

A nighttime photograph of the Boston skyline across the Charles River. The city lights reflect off the water, creating a vibrant mirror image. The Prudential Tower is prominent on the left, and the John Hancock Tower is on the right. Other buildings of various heights are visible against the dark sky.

# MBTA Late-Night Service

Proposed Service Changes

Fiscal & Management Control Board

February 29, 2016



Massachusetts Bay  
Transportation Authority

*massDOT*  
Massachusetts Department of Transportation



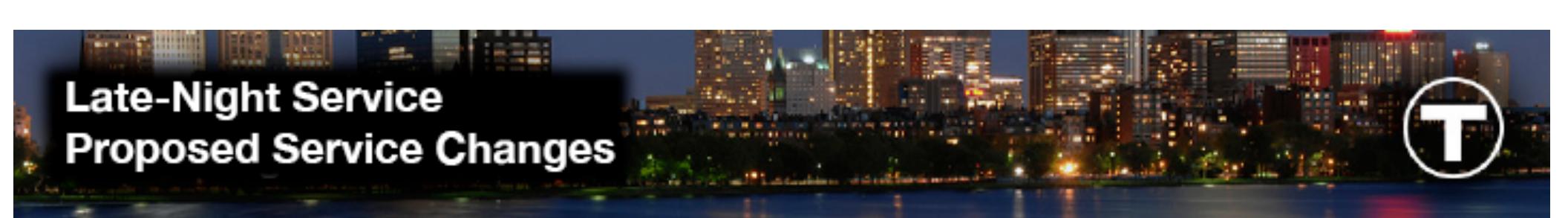
## History of Late-Night MBTA Service

- In 2001, the MBTA introduced a bus-only Night Owl service that ran a limited schedule until 2:30am
  - Cancelled in 2005 for budgetary reasons
- In March 2014, the MBTA launched a new Late-Night pilot program to:
  - Offer longer hours of public transportation for nighttime workers
  - Support the restaurant and entertainment industries
- MBTA service was extended from the usual 12:30am closing time until 2:30am on Friday and Saturday nights/early mornings
  - All subway and trolley lines
  - The Silver Line
  - 14 Key Bus Routes
- In June 2015, Late-Night service was cut back to a 2am closure time, and service was eliminated on the five least-used bus routes (the 15, 22, 71, 73, and 77)



## Current Service - Negative Impact on Maintenance

- Late-Night operation reduces critical time for system maintenance
  - Reduced access to tracks and right-of-way for maintenance
  - Usual five hours of system maintenance (approximate) is reduced to three hours of system maintenance on early Saturdays and Sundays
  - The FMCB has charged the MBTA to prioritize system maintenance and upgrades; maximum overnight access to tracks and right-of-way is crucial to meeting maintenance goals



## Late-Night Service Proposed Service Changes



# Current Service - Low Ridership

- Ridership has been low relative to overall MBTA ridership
  - 16,000 average nightly Late-Night riders (over 120 minutes) at launch
  - 13,000 average nightly Late-Night riders (over 90 minutes) by December 2015

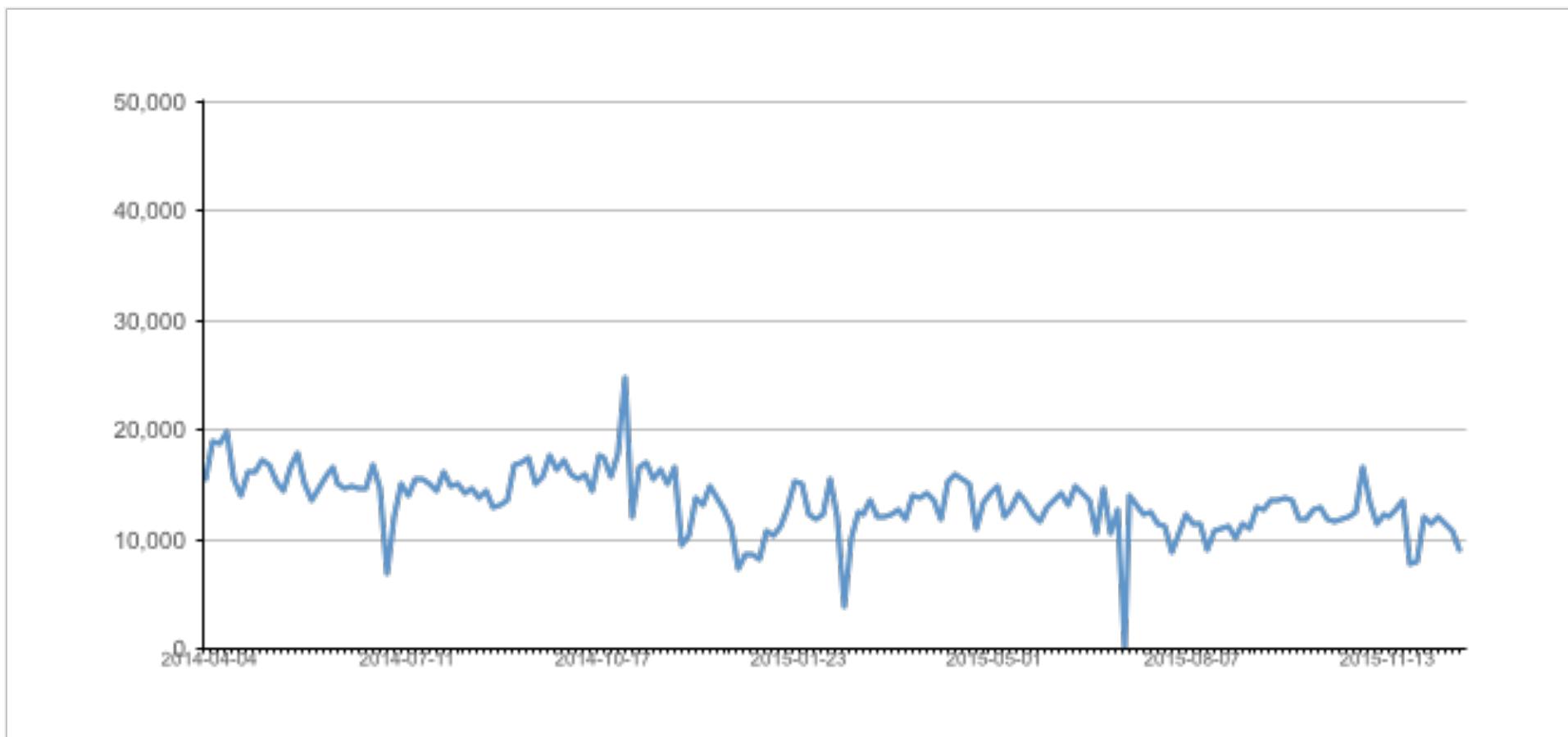
### Comparisons

- Ridership during the 5pm weekday hour is 72,711
- Ridership during the 3pm Saturday hour is 33,271
- Ridership during the 5am weekday hour is 14,562
- Two nights/week of 90 additional minutes of T service offers an insufficient transportation alternative for many third-shift workers

# Late-Night Service Proposed Service Changes



## Declining Ridership





## Current Service - High Costs

- Operating costs are high relative both to ridership and to the costs of non-Late Night MBTA service
- Private contributions to support Late-Night service were time-limited and insufficient to meaningfully offset operating costs; anticipated contributions to sustain service did not materialize
- Late-Night service has been removed from the proposed FT2017 MBTA operating budget, resulting in a direct savings of \$9 million



## Late-Night Service Proposed Service Changes



### Public Input

- The MBTA held three public meetings, which 80 people attended
  - January 19th at 10am - Boston
  - January 19th at 5pm - Boston
  - January 20th at 6pm - Cambridge
- The T also received 272 comments by email, phone, and social media



## Late-Night Service Proposed Service Changes



### Public Input

- Most comments were supportive of maintaining Late-Night service for the following reasons:
- Offers an affordable transportation option for late-night employees
- Is a perceived safer alternative to walking and taxis
- Reduces impaired driving
- Provides economic benefits by making Boston attractive to tourists and people who want to stay out late
- Supports the entertainment and restaurant industries
- Provides late-night access to Logan Airport for employees and travelers



## Late-Night Service Proposed Service Changes



# Public Input - Recommendations

- Some commenters provided ideas for preserving Late-Night service:
  - Charge higher fares
  - Increase private/institutional sponsorships
  - Reduce service
  - Increase ridership through more advertising of the service
  - Require universities to subsidize

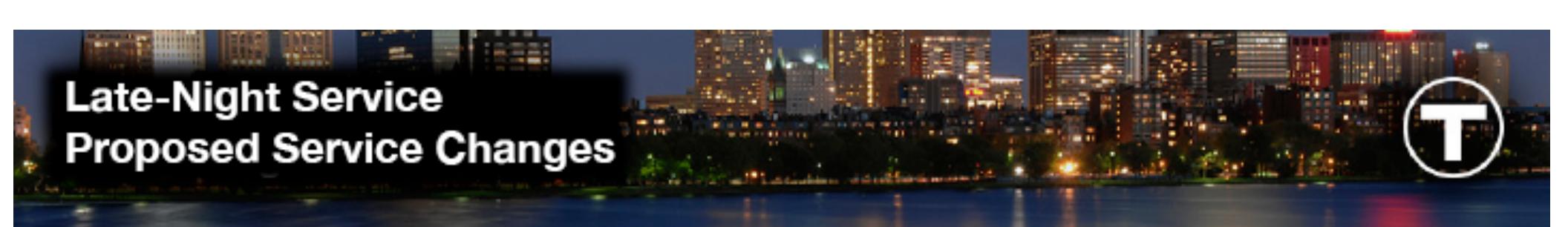


## Late-Night Service Proposed Service Changes



# Equity Analysis

- The MBTA does not believe that an equity analysis is required with respect to consideration of whether to cancel Late-Night service, both because the current Late-Night service is a pilot service and because the cancellation of 180 minutes of service on just two nights per week does not constitute a ‘major service change,’ for which an equity analysis is required
- The MBTA is in discussions with the FTA regarding these issues; further action may be appropriate, pending those discussions



## Late-Night Service Proposed Service Changes



# Conclusions

- Late-Night service inhibits the ability of the MBTA to meet its goals for maintaining its tracks and rights-of-way
- Ridership is low and declining, but is popular with some (as shown by the public comments)
- At only three additional hours per week, Late-Night service does not provide meaningful transportation for workers
- Due to the overall fiscal situation of the MBTA, the T must prioritize investment in core services; accordingly, the T cannot continue to subsidize Late-Night service to such a significant extent due to the failure to attract both significant third-party funding and high ridership



## Service Change Options

1. To cancel the current Late-Night service in mid-March
2. To continue the current Late-Night service, with or without further service changes
3. To cancel the current Late-Night service, but to instruct MBTA staff to continue working with respondents to the Late-Night service RFI to see if a privatized, less-subsidized alternative can be developed